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ACTIVITIES BY THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN FAVOUR OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Prepared by the ECA secretariat

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A. Evolution of activities

1. Twenty one out of the world's 31 least developed countries are in the ECA region. Of the 21 African LDCs, 11 are land-locked and two are island countries. Together these 21 countries represent about 40 per cent of the total membership of the Commission and about one third the total population of the region. Four other African countries have also requested to be included in the list of least developed countries.

2. Until recently, ECA did not engage in special efforts aimed exclusively at the least developed African countries. Given the limited resources available to the Commission it was not feasible to develop specific programmes designed solely for this group of countries. There is however no doubt that the development programmes and activities established by ECA for the region as a whole have had important impacts on the least developed African countries. The greatest impact was felt in the following areas: (a) studies and research with a view to identifying and increasing the effectiveness of programmes and to providing data and other material information for action at the international level, and (b) supportive action at the international level for collective efforts to increase the flow of aid at concessional terms to adapt technical assistance to the priorities and limitations of the least developed countries, and to facilitate international trade for these countries through commodity agreements, price stabilization and the adaptation of general preference systems, etc.

3. A systematic approach by ECA to the problems of the least developed African countries was first formalized in the "Revised framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa" 1/, and the medium-term plan for 1976-1981. 2/

4. In the "Revised framework of Principles for the Implementation of the New International Economic Order in Africa", it is contended that the least developed countries are distinguished from other developing countries by the benign neglect to which they were subjected either because their former colonizers perceived relatively few opportunities for export production or because of the limited degree to which they were suitable for European settlement. The immediate issues facing these countries were therefore identified as follows:

- There is need for a more systematic exploitation and evaluation of resources, in particular natural resources in dynamic demand in export markets. This calls for the utilization of modern technologies operated on a multinational basis and support services in negotiating the extraction and export of these resources and in the attendant training requirements.

- Development of food products for export is likely to require considerable capabilities in determining the resource base for agriculture and animal production and in modernizing such production as well as in organizing and marketing food products.

1/ E/CN.14/ECO/99/Rev. 3.

2/ E/CN.14/TECO/31.

- For those least developed countries which are land-locked there is need to establish and improve transport links with the sea and of port and harbour facilities available in coastal states, to enhance the effectiveness of the legal and organizational bases for facilitating the rapid transit of exports and imports, and to develop alternative routes to the sea.

- Underground water resources should be exploited for tackling the immediate problem of providing adequate water supply for nomadic population both for human consumption and for livestock. In the longer term this should be seen as part of a programme for the settlement of nomads and a measure for minimizing the effects of drought.

- Economic community-type arrangements will eventually become important as the sources of dynamic growth and self-sustainment begin to shift from extra-continental economic relations to relations with neighbouring States.

- Development of human and institutional resources is of considerable importance in the design and implementation of policies and programmes relating to the processing of agricultural raw materials, food production, the exploration and exploitation of mineral and hydrocarbon resources and transportation and marketing.

5. In view of the expanded effort called for to address these issues, in February 1978 an interdivisional committee on the least developed countries was established within the ECA secretariat charged with the task of supervising, co-ordinating and monitoring the formulation and development of the policies, strategies and programmes of ECA designed to assist the least developed African countries.

6. The fifth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers held at Rabat in March 1979 made major strides in defining specific actions on behalf of the least developed African countries. In resolution 353(XIV) the Conference invited the Executive Secretary of ECA, within the framework of Africa's Development Strategy, to draw up a special programme of aid and assistance to least developed, land-locked and island countries and appealed to member States to take the necessary measures to ensure the success of ongoing bilateral and multilateral negotiations aimed at facilitating access to ports for land-locked countries including goods transit facilities as well as appropriate application of customs charges. The Executive Secretary was further invited in co-operation with donor countries, international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, to give substantial aid to the least developed countries, particularly land-locked and island countries, in their endeavours to open up their economies. The resolution also called on all member countries to give their full support to the crash programme and the new programme of action for the 1980s elaborated in the Arusha Programme for Collective Self-reliance and Framework for Negotiations adopted at the fourth Conference of Ministers of the Group of 77 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania.

7. Pursuant to this resolution and with the launching of the Comprehensive New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries by UNCTAD at Manila in June 1979, ECA significantly stepped up its special efforts on behalf of the least developed African countries. ECA convened an intergovernmental conference from 17 to 22 March 1980 at Addis Ababa to consider the problems and prospects of the African least developed countries and more specifically the implications of the Comprehensive New Programme of Action regarding national development programmes, mobilization of external resources and the machinery required at the regional level. The Conference reviewed the critical circumstances of the least developed African countries, identified areas requiring urgent action analysed provisions made for the least developed countries at the international level and adopted a set of specific proposals and courses of action. The recommendations and the consolidated

statement adopted by the Conference on strategies, priorities and policies for the African least developed countries were endorsed by the fifteenth session/sixth meeting of the Conference of Ministers in resolution 397(XV) and embodied in the Lagos Plan of Action for the Implementation of the African Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa.

8. Specifically the Conference agreed that, as far as the role of ECA during the Third United Nations Development Decade within the framework of the African Strategy in the 1980s is concerned, ECA, as the main organ of the United Nations in Africa, is responsible for initiating and participating in measures to facilitate concerted action for socio-economic development in Africa. Furthermore, considering the Development Strategy for Africa for the Third United Nations Development Decade and the mandate given to regional commissions by the General Assembly in its resolutions 32/197 and 34/206, it is imperative that ECA must be totally involved in the development process of African least developed countries particularly since about two thirds of the world's least developed countries are in Africa and comprise almost half the membership of ECA. The Conference affirmed that ECA had a special role to play in the further elaboration, monitoring, review and evaluation of the Comprehensive New Programme of Action for the least developed countries and recommended the establishment of an annual Conference of Ministers of African Least Developed Countries and the creation within the Commission secretariat of an adequately staffed organizational unit to be responsible for the substantial and continuous technical work, substantive support and advisory services that need to be carried out.

B. Over-view of past and future activities

9. Given the various mandates entrusted to the Commission secretariat in respect of the least developed African countries it is evident that the number of concrete projects to be executed on behalf of the least developed countries will increase considerably. At this stage, such projects are however only in the process of being formulated. Below, under various subject areas, an overview of the work undertaken by ECA and an indication of the kinds of assistance that it expects to render to the least developed African countries in the 1980s are given.

Development issues and policies

10. - Beginning with the 1969 Survey of Economic and Social Conditions in Africa where a special study was made of the agriculturally based African economies, ECA has devoted an important part of the annual Survey to the review of social and economi trends in the least developed African countries. These studies have served in identifying problems, analysing policies followed by the countries themselves and following the implementation of the measures proposed at the international level to help the least developed countries.

11. For the 1980s activities in the research and planning fields will be geared towards assisting the least developed African countries in their planning and programming efforts for the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action. Specifically ECA will continue its work on in-depth studies of the special circumstances of these countries including studies on perspectives and projections and the development of economic statistics with a view to enhancing policy formulation and the monitoring of economic development. Furthermore, assistance will be rendered to the least developed countries :

(a) Assessing and reviewing international efforts in the implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action in order to improve aid modalities, adjust aid volumes and aid use to the development needs of the countries and devise appropriate changes in aid programmes,

(b) Formulating policies designed to effect structural changes in their economies so as to put domestic resources to more complete use and provide the basic needs of the mass poor.

Statistics and population

12. During the past few years ECA's statistical programme has been progressively adapted to meet the expected requirements at the national, regional and global levels. Considerations that have guided the development of the programme have been the emergence of the basic needs approach to development, the growing improtance attached to population questions in the planning process, the continuing need to improve data on sectoral and over-all growth as a basis for analysing related problems and the demand for more rapid access to available data. As the effective development of statistical services is dependent on adequate staffing, measures to make Africa more self-reliant in statistical training have been an equally important consideration.

13. To meet the requirements ECA has now several ongoing interrelated projects in which the least developed African countries are given and will during the 1980s continue to be given, special attention. These projects include:

(a) The African household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP) which offers a wide variety of interrelated economic, social and demographic data in addition to the information for basic needs planning;

(b) The Regional Advisory Service in Demographic Statistics which has assisted many least developed countries in the various rounds of censuses and has helped to focus the attention of these countries more clearly on the technical problems of developing a co-ordinated system of demographic and social statistics;

(c) Assistance to the least developed and newly independent countries in national accounts which has involved specific visits to individual least developed countries to enhance their national accounts capabilities and assist in the training of national staff in data collection for various sectors, including agricultural statistics and the concepts, definitions and methods of national accounts estimates;

(d) The Statistical Training Programme for Africa which will be intensified to provide technical assistance to countries in organizing staff training and in negotiating with prospective donors and co-ordinating fellowship awards.

Agricultural development

14. ECA's work programme in agriculture over the past ten years has been geared to assisting the Governments of member countries to improve their agricultural development policies, plans and projects with a view to making them self-sufficient in food and more effective in the use of their resources for the accelerated development of the agricultural sector based on a strategy of self-reliance and

rural transformation incorporating the use of appropriate technology. Projects directly benefiting the least developed African countries have been executed mainly through subregional organizations such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission, the Liptako-Gourma Authority and ECA's Multinational Programming and Operational Centres(MULPOCs).

15. In the past few years activities in this area have been dominated by the implementation of the FAO Regional Food Plan for Africa with a view to improving self-sufficiency in food in African countries. The recommendations of the resolutions of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held in Rome in July 1979 have had a significant impact on the work programmes of the secretariat.

16. During the 1970s, agriculture, the mainstay of the economies of the least developed African countries, grew by a mere 1.4 per cent on average per annum. The food supply situation was particularly precarious in most of these countries, with the rates of population growth far outstripping the growth of output. The development of the agricultural base in order to achieve not only self-sufficiency in food production but also production of an adequate surplus has thus become a critical issue in these countries. Moreover it is estimated that 30 to 60 per cent of the food in the least developed African countries is wasted for want of adequate handling, marketing and storage arrangements and transport facilities. In the coming years ECA intends to address these issues through an expanded programme of assistance to countries to enable them to raise yields through labour intensive methods, comprehensive land reform, improved technology, intensive use of modern inputs, improvement of irrigation and drainage systems, improved physical and institutional infrastructure such as feeder roads and medium-scale storage as well as processing, marketing and credit facilities. Programmes will also be developed to ensuring a much higher degree of food security and promoting the expansion of agricultural exports.

Industrial development

17. For the past ten years, ECA's activities to promote industrial development in Africa covered all member States at the national, subregional and regional levels and included assistance to African countries in the identification of industrial constraints and their possible solutions, in the formulation, co-ordination, planning and implementation of industrial development strategies, targets and policies and in the establishment and strengthening of institutional machinery for promoting and monitoring industrial development programmes.

18. Sectoral development programmes are being implemented in chemicals, metals, engineering, food and agro-based industries and the building materials and construction industries - basic industries which are considered strategic for African industrialization. The implementation of these sectoral programmes has involved the mounting of field missions, project identification, the promotion of project ideas, advising on suitable policies and strategies as well as the preparation of project profiles and proposals on operational measures and programmes for developing the required capabilities in these projects. It has also necessitated convening expert meetings at the subregional and regional levels to discuss and formulate action programmes using the findings of mission reports based on priorities within the sectors.

19. The least developed African countries have benefited individually and collectively from the above activities. However, most of the failures in industrial policies and strategies pursued by African countries during the 1970s, notably in import substitution, were experienced in this group of countries. Within this group of countries, therefore, substantially more ambitious programmes of industrial development would have to be undertaken in the 1980s. These should be centred on agro-based and agro-supported industries. The focus of future ECA activities for the least developed African countries will thus be:

(a) Strengthening ongoing small-scale and rural industries development programme;

(b) Assistance to countries in making inventories and surveys of natural resources in terms of market potentials and skills and to link such surveys and exploration to exploitation and development involving indigenous national and regional organizations;

(c) Assistance to countries in promoting industrial co-operation through joint ventures, joint production of components, subcontracting, joint purchase and sales, joint training, exchange of directorates and shares, appointment of commercial agents, etc.;

(d) Assistance to countries in the promotion of joint ventures or multinational corporations for joint exploration, exploitation and development of natural resources;

(e) Assistance in training and skill development, e.g. entrepreneurial, managerial and technological capabilities for innovation, formulation, implementation and operation of industrial plants with particular reference to the use of teaching institutions;

(f) Assistance in opening regional markets for food, cotton fabrics, leather shoes, wood products, building materials, etc.

Minerals, water resources and energy

20. ECA's activities in the natural resources development field have centred on the promotion through national, subregional and regional efforts, of exploration, inventory, development exploitation and utilization of minerals, water and energy resources in Africa.

21. The least developed African countries have extensive undeveloped land areas, the geography and geology of which are as yet not fully explored. This suggests that a rich resource base might eventually be found and harnessed. A major focus of the work programme of the secretariat for the 1980s would thus be on assistance to these countries to intensify the exploration and harnessing of their natural resource base. Activities will include the following in the mineral sector:

(a) Assistance to countries in the development of national capabilities for mineral sector planning, exploration and project identification through technical assistance missions, on-the-job training of local personnel and institution building;

(b) Assistance to countries in carrying out systematic surveys to identify the potential resource base and to intensify exploration of the unknown mineral occurrences;

(c) Assistance to countries in the systematic exploration of non-metallic raw materials to be used in domestic industries including construction materials, raw materials for the ceramic and glass industries and raw materials for certain industries;

(d) Assistance in carrying out market analysis and in the marketing of export commodities.

For the water resources sector, activities in the 1980s would focus on assistance and advisory services to member States in such areas as:

(a) Assessment of surface and ground water availability, use and demand in terms of quantity and quality. Efforts will be undertaken to establish data processing and storage centres and to develop integrated national data systems;

(b) Preparation of long- and medium-term plans which will provide guidance in drawing up specific water supply and waste-water disposal projects. Special emphasis will be given to community water supply and sanitation projects, closely integrated with rural development projects, paying due regard to the population of the rural sector, to assist in achieving the targets of the "International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, 1981-1990";

(c) Formulation of programmes for the development of water resources in drought-affected African countries. Assistance will also be given in drawing up programmes for flood control and hydrological forecasting;

(d) Attainment of the targets set by the World Food Conference of 1974 and the Mar del Plata Action Plan of 1977 in respect of agricultural water use. In addition to achieve the targets as stipulated in the Regional Food Plan for Africa, assistance will be given to selected countries in the formulation of programmes and identification of projects for irrigation, drainage and land reclamation;

(e) Promotion of subregional and regional co-operation in water resources development and economic utilization through strengthening existing joint river/lake basin commissions and/or creating new ones to stimulate the integrated develoment of river and lake basins shared by more than one country;

(f) Manpower surveys at the subregional and regional levels leading to the establishment of multinational water resources development institutes for water resources development, training, management, research and other specialized services. The institutes will have been commenced educating and training subprofessional and professional staff for operation, management and research in water resources development by 1989.

22. For the energy sector, activities for the least developed countries in the 1980s would focus on promoting the development of non-conventional energy resources. In particular advisory services will be rendered to countries on the development and utilization of solar, wind and biogas energy. In the field of electrical energy and rural electrification, the secretariat will continue to encourage the establishment of training, institutions make proposals for the manufacture on a multinational basis of electrical components and undertake studies on the standardization of electrical equipment in Africa and on the interconnection of national electrical grids in African countries. Specific surveys will also be undertaken of potential hydro-electric plants for river basins, and the development of economically attractive small-scale hydro-electric and thermal power schemes for rural areas will be promoted as well as the establishment of national institutions for rural electrification.

Science and technology

23. The programme of work in science and technology has the primary objective of assisting in the development of technologies consistent with national policies and suited to the needs and conditions of the African countries and in the application of such technologies to national development. The programme has involved the local generation of science and technology and the selection, transfer and adaptation of technologies obtained from external sources as well as the promotion of co-operation among countries and relevant agencies. The activities of the secretariat have led to the establishment of the African Regional Centre for Technology, the African Regional Organization for Standardization and the Industrial Property Organization of African English-Speaking Countries as well as national organs for science and technology in individual countries.

24. Technolgical capability in the African least developed countries is at present very low and the framework for technology policies is inadequate and structurally weak. Most countries depend almost entirely on foreign sources of technology. Besides being costly to acquire, imported technology is often ill-suited to the needs and circumstances of the least developed countries.

25. In the areas of manpower and training, there are serious shortages of persons who combine engineering and agricultural expertise with the skills of managers, industrial designers, production and process engineers, engineering draftsmen, food technologists, quality control personnel and management accountants, to name but a few.

26. To a great extent the weaknesses in the technological capabilities of the least developed countries are due to the fact that in most countries the possibilities of policy as an instrument of development are only implicitly perceived. Few countries have explicitly translated technological policy formulated within the whole institutional framework of government policy making and economic planning into a plan of action for strengthening their technological capability.

27. Special attention will therefore be given to the needs of the least developed countries in ECA's programme of work in science and technology in the 1980s. The major elements of this programme are as follows:

(a) Developing capabilities by organizing programmes and activities at the regional level for optimum impact, promoting other programmes on request at the national level, especially technical assistance for the establishment and/or strengthening of national technology centres;

(b) Conducting specific studies, surveys, etc., and carrying out research organizing study tours, ad hoc meetings, training seminars and workshops, working groups and meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Science and Technology Development in Africa; and arranging for the execution of scientific and technoligical programmes by the ECA Multinational Programming and Operational Centres, etc.

(c) Intensive collection, analysis, cataloguing and dissemination of information on science-and technology-related matters;

(d) Greater contacts with individuals responsible for the execution of science and technology programmes and with science and technology institutions at the national level;

(e) Ensuring better utilization of resources by allocating staff and funds to programmes and activities which are likely to have a multiplier effect;

(f) Exploiting opportunities for joint implementation of activities with OAU and other organizations within and outside the United Nations system (especially the relevant regional institutions in science and technology, e.g., the African Regional Centre for Technology, the African Regional Organization for Standardization, the Industrial Property Organization of English-Speaking Africa, etc.).

International trade and finance

28. In the international trade and finance field a number of specific projects which are of particular interest to the least developed countries have been carried out or are in the process of execution. These activities relate first to the project on multilateral trade negotiations (MTN) under which a systematic effort was made to identify all non-tariff barriers facing the exports of least developed African countries and to assist in pressing for their removal or lowering in the context of MTN. Special missions were mounted to least developed countries in the southern African subregion with a view to gathering information on problems faced by them in MTN and to determining their assistance needs.

29. Another area of activity concerned the problems of transit trade with special reference to land-locked countries. Activities conducted under this programme included the major study on transit trade problems faced by the Eastern and Central African States followed by a meeting of representatives of these States held in 1976.

30. The least developed countries stand to gain most from the two ongoing projects on the establishment of multinational mining and industrial banks and of an intra-African development aid system. These projects are of particular interest to the extent that it is this group of countries that is most in need of the kind of finance and specialized services that such banks are supposed to offer, because, on the whole on an individual basis they have less access to world capital markets.

31. In rendering advisory services and general backstopping to such subregional intra-trade promotion institutions as ECOWAS and the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern African States, systematic care was taken to ensure that the interests and concerns of the least developed countries were taken into account by way of appropriate mechnaisms such as compensation and development funds.

32. For the 1980s the secretariat's assistance in promoting the expansion of the external trade sector of the least developed African countries will focus on the following:

(a) Assistance in projections for future demand of commodities;

(b) Assistance in the establishment of joint ventures in transit systems and food storage facilities;

(c) Studies on actual improvement of procurement management and supply system;

(d) Comprehensive manpower development programme in the fields of international trade and trade negotiations;

(e) Assistance in the establishment of an integrated export/import development plan;

(f) Study on the possibility of creating a special fund for export credit financing;

(g) Assistance in establishment of trade information systems;

(h) Assistance in the establishment and consolidation of trade institutions.

Economic co-operation and integration

33. To promote economic co-operation and integration among African countries ECA has established a network of five African Multinational Programming and Operational Centres (MULPOCs) for Eastern and Southern Africa based at Lusaka, for the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries based, at Gisenyi, for Central Africa based at Yaounde, for West Africa (ECOWAS member States) based at Niamey and for North Africa based at Tangiers.

34. The MULPOCs are the operational arms of the secretariat and their membership covers all the least developed African countries. Through them the secretariat has become more closely associated with the national and subregional interests and problems of member States. In future they will play an even more catalytic role, enhancing the impact of the secretariat's activities as the focal point for the activities of all the specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations in each subregion and as the agent for the promotion of meaningful subregional co-operation and integration.

Transport and communications

35. ECA's activities in the transport and communications sector which have been of direct relevance to the least developed African countries have included studies on rural roads which dealt with methods of planning, financing and managing rural roads and techniques of building, upgrading and maintaining them. Special attention has been paid to transit and facilitation problems between land-locked countries and their associated maritime States. In the civil aviation area, assistance was rendered to several least developed countries in investing the air freight aspects of trade development among developing countries with specific emphasis on the exploitation of foreign markets capable of absorbing African agricultural horticultural, mineral and certain finished products. The various ongoing trans-African highway programmes are of direct benefit to the least developed African countries. In the communications field, a project for a study on the use of radio broadcasting for accelerating development especially in rural Africa will affect all the 21 least developed African countries.

36. Available evidence indicates that the transport capacity is grossly inadequate in the least developed countries especially in terms of import/export and rural development requirements. For the land-locked least developed countries, the lack of access to the sea, compounded by their remoteness and isolation from world markets, appears to be the main factor behind their relative poverty.

37. Few African least developed countries have a railway system and where such a system exists, the rolling stock is very limited. Road services tend to be the most important mode of transport in African least developed countries. Yet, in terms of motor vehicle capacity, these countries are relatively less endowed than the rest of developing African countries. The road network in most of these countries is likewise very much undeveloped both in terms of coverage and construction standards.

38. The land-locked African least developed countries depend almost entirely on the ports and shipping facilities of neighbouring States. Of the coastal least developed countries, only Somalia is shown in international statistics as having a large tonnage of registered shipping capacity. Thus in general the coastal and island least developed countries depend on foreign shipping services for the bulk of their maritime trade.

39. Except for a country like Ethiopia, which has a well-developed airline, or others which are located on important air routes, most African least developed countries have very weak domestic as well as international air links. Both passenger-kilometres and freight-kilometres carried are generally relatively very low in these countries.

40. The focus of secretariat activities in the 1980s will be assistance in the implementation of the Plan of Action of the United Nations Transport Decade in Africa. Special efforts will be made to redress the disadvantaged position and enormous transport and communication problems of the land-locked least developed countries. Parallel action will also be taken to promote the improvement of capacity generally in the various transport modes in all the least developed countries.

Human resources

(a) Education and training.

41. The secretariat will render assistance and advisory services to least developed countries to remedy the present dysfunctional nature of education and training in these countries along the following lines:

(i) Training programmes should be concerned to respond to specific needs for all categories of manpower in clearly identified priority development areas;

(ii) Non-formal education and training system, including distant and correspondence education should be promoted to provide urgent skills needed for immediate development activities;

(iii) Co-operation will be promoted among countries for sharing facilities and pooling resources;

(iv) Curricula should be developed to respond to the training and skills requirements of the least developed countries;

(v) Technical co-operation amon developing countries should be promoted

(b) Labour and employment.

42. It goes with saying that labour and employment generation policies must be designed in line with economic planning and potentials. ECA will, assist the least developed countries in their planning and programming:

(i) To stem the rural exodus, through labour-intensive agricultural development projects in irrigation, soil conservation, livestock;

(ii) To promote industrial and non-agricultural development, through training systems to provide skills for planned and ongoing economic development activities;

(iii) To use expertise from within and outside this group of countries freely regardless of nationality wherever skills are needed;

(iv) To promote the "reverse transfer of technology" in order to bring back the skills and expertise operating in the industrialized countries so that especially in industry and services they could be used in relevant areas of economic development activities;

(v) To integrate manpower planning, and especially its utilization, more fully into economic development planning and as a more realistic part of development planning objectives.

Social development

43. Since the least developed African countries are predominantly rural and since about half the population consists of women and over half is under 15 years of age, ECA's three interrelated programmes on integrated rural development, the African Training and Research Centre for Women(ATRCW) and Youth and Social Welfare Development have played, and will continue to play, a significant role in ECA's programme of assistance for the least developed countries.

44. Under the integrated rural development programme assistance rendered to countries is directed at achieving the broader perspective of far-reaching transformation of economic and social structures, institutions and relations and processes in the rural areas. Among these broader objectives have been the creation of more employment opportunities both on and off the farm; more equitable access to arable land; more widely distributed improvements in health, nutrition, and housing; and broader access to the kind of formal (in-school) and non-formal (out-of-school) education for adults and children that is of direct relevance to the needs and aspirations of rural dwellers.

45. In the fields of youth and social welfare, the assistance that the secretariat renders covers planning for national youth policies and programmes geared to integrating young people fully in national development plans and national development; national youth services; education (both formal and non-formal); training in general and in particular vocational training with a view to providing skills and qualifications aimed at offering job opportunities and promoting employment for people, stopping unemployment and narrowing the exodus of migration of youth towards cities and urban centres; social security schemes or programmes; family welfare programmes or education; functional adult literacy, which means in fact non-formal education and training for youth; schools for social workers; and seminars for training youth and social leaders, etc.

46. Within the programme of the African Training and Research Centre for Women the secretariat aims to promote the progressive integration of African women and girls in national development through the establishment of national machineries, appropriate technology, technical co-operation among developing countries, training, study tours and scholarships, research, communications, information and publications.